

STATUS OF WOMEN: 1900

THEIR GENERALLY IMPROVED CONDITION AT END OF THE CENTURY.

Review of Their Progress in Educational and Industrial Fields—Women's Organizations.

Perhaps there is no better record of the true progress of any century than that which may be found in the progress of its women. Equally true is it that there is no better indication of woman's progress than is revealed by the progress of her time. Most inadequate, therefore, would be any study of the status of nations that does not include the status of women.

In our own country the best evidence of woman's rapid growth and exalted position lies in the fact that we have already ceased to consider her as a separate factor in our social economy, and recognize her not as an individual only, but in her relations to humanity and life. Thus it has come to pass that, while the one woman still holds for each of us the charm that belongs to the best beloved, it is womanhood as a whole that challenges our thought and study.

That the world should have placed woman on its list of topics worthy of the trouble of investigation is a significant fact. During the nineteenth century no other material force has so challenged and stimulated curiosity as has the mysterious power of electricity. In the intangible woman curiosity has been beguiled or baffled or rewarded by the mysteries of womanhood. Indeed the woman nature may be termed an electric element, revealing itself only by its effects, an omnipotent, vital, subtle force, dazzling with a smile, playing with a touch, beneficent or destructive according to the skill with which it is handled, a factor impossible to eliminate, and, except by experts, not always easy to control.

A CHANGE OF IDEAS.

In knowledge of this element the country has made great progress. Even in its first decade it loosened its grip upon the fallacy that men knew all about women that was to be known, and every succeeding decade has held its feeble fallacies concerning women less tenaciously, until some of them have been abandoned altogether. Thus have slipped away the old notions about her proper sphere, in which she was supposed to revolve placidly around some domestic object of loyalty and devotion. Thus have sunk out of sight the old plummet, by means of which was sounded the depth of her capacity. Thus has snapped the line that measured her possibilities and changed the judgment that divined her limitations.

There is something in a dear, old-fashioned book about the work in her hands praising her. *Provi. xxi. 31.* Certainly in the earlier centuries, if she was praised for anything, it was for the work of her hands, and while we notice great progress along educational, social and political lines, her growth in economic value is most in evidence in her changed industrial life. From the United States Bureau of Statistics, and various other sources, we learn that in 1838 there were only seven occupations open to women. She could get employment as a teacher, a milliner, a dressmaker, a servant or a factory operative. Up to the time of the civil war, aside from factory employees, women's work, both North and South, was carried on chiefly in the home. At the close of the war, a great many of the trained workers in the clothing factories, cotton mills, shoe binders, etc. In 1880 wage-earners had increased from ten to twenty-two millions, and the half a million women had grown to the number of four millions.

At this time the population of the United States was 76,000,000. Ten years later there were over 90,000,000. In 1897 women were employed in over 400 money-making occupations. According to the census, the gain of the women in the trades in 1890 over the enumeration of 1870 was 64 per cent., and the total percentage of women workers for the whole country was 49 per cent. The next ten years, until 1890, shows a still larger percentage, and many more open avenues for toil.

In 1894 the investigation of the United States commission among the poorer classes of the population showed that in the four principal cities of the United States, that out of every 100 women workers an average of forty-eight were earning less than \$5 a week. The testimony with reference to their use of money says that, in the savings institutions women deposit nearly double the amount than saved by men, that of the dependents on charity, men are largely in the majority, and the labor statistics assert that more than three-fourths of the wage-earning women of the country not only support themselves, but are the mainstay of others, who are dependent upon them.

That man is invariably the bread-winner does not seem to be borne out by the facts. The statement of one expert is that in the quarters inhabited by the very poor it is the women who are the bread-winners as a rule, and that there are more women who live on the labor of women and children, than women and children who subsist alone on the labor of men.

EDUCATION OF WOMEN.

Our space will permit only a momentary glance at the facts concerning women who have been forced into fields of labor outside the home. But the facts will suffice to show that the changed industrial conditions mean progress for the country and progress for the individual woman.

Marked as the century has been for the training of the hand, it stands supreme among all centuries for the higher training of the brain. The longing for better education on the part of women began, nobody knows when, but long before the opening of this century. It made itself actively felt near the close of its first fifty years. As an illustration of her statement that "every woman who is not a scholar is a recognized individuality in any department of life," Miss Anthony says, "No provision was made in public or private schools for their education, except in rudimentary branches." She adds, "Harriet Hosmer traveled from end to end of the country, begging the opportunity to study anatomy. Not one standard medical school would admit Elizabeth Blackwell, and society ostracized her. Antoinette Brown graduated from Oberlin, but even that institution placed every obstacle in her way to the theological school. One of the faculty said to her, 'If there were any by-laws that would shut you out you would not be admitted.'"

From 1846 to 1856 was a period for many efforts on the part of women to secure better intellectual training. In this period Matthew Vassar, "recognized in women the same intellectual constitution as in men" and opened Vassar College in September, 1860, with 400 students. That was a glorious

beginning. Since that date eight-tenths of the colleges for men, of all grades, have admitted and graduated women on equal terms with men, and the professional and technical schools also number their graduates by thousands.

SCHOOLS AND PROFESSIONS.

From the United States Educational Report of 1896 and 1897, we learn that fourteen colleges for women, ranking with men's colleges, conferred 709 degrees on women. One hundred and forty-eight other women's seminaries, colleges, etc., conferred 1,217 degrees. Coeducational institutions conferred over 2,000 degrees, from which one gathers that the general tendency is toward entering the coeducational institutions, and the corresponding diminution in women's colleges.

Eight-tenths of the colleges, the universities and the professional schools of the United States are open to women. Thirty thousand girls have already graduated from college, and 40,000 more are preparing to do so, says Mrs. Palmer, former president of Wellesley. While eight-tenths of the colleges, universities, etc., are open to women, it is to be noted also that eight-tenths of the teachers of the country are already women.

Many of us can well remember when we were frightened at the idea of trusting our precious invalids to the care of a woman. Now we have not at all repented of the fright as yet, though the census of 1890 showed over 2,500 women physicians who supported three large schools and several small ones and conducted seven hospitals of their own. In 1897 there were about 1,600 women pursuing medical studies.

The year 1894 found 150 women practicing law. When they have been admitted to practice at the bar of their own State they may admit to practice in the United States Supreme Court. In some parts of the country they have served as police judges, justices of the peace, grand and petit jurors, Federal and State court clerks, examiners in chancery and examiners of applicants for admission to the bar. There are law courses connected with the New York University, and founded by the Women's Legal Education Society. These courses are intended to meet the needs of business women, and women in private life who desire familiarity with the existing laws.

Among regularly ordained clergymen there were in 1890 150 women, preaching in thirty-four States. At the Parisian conference of Religieuses in 1890 it was stated that seventeen religious denominations then admitted women to their theological schools, ordained and gave them pastorates.

POLITICAL CHANGES.

Marked as have been the changes in industrial and educational conditions of women, they are after all less significant than the change in her political status. The century was nearly fifty years old before the tide of sentiment in favor of improved political standing for women resulted in their first convention. The tide of interest in this topic had been slowly rising for twenty years. If found its expression through the same people who were engaged in the movement for the abolition of slavery. Among its leaders were Lucretia Mott, Maria Weston Chapman, Lydia Maria Childs and the Grimké sisters.

In a statement concerning the new movement, Mrs. Livermore says: "Its leaders demanded equal rights in colleges and universities, trades and professions, complete equality in marriage, equal rights in property, guardianship of minor children, equal wages for equal work, right to make contracts, personal freedom, to sue and to be sued, to serve on juries, especially when women are to be tried, and, finally, the right to vote, and to share in political office, honor and emoluments."

As yet only seven States give the father and mother equal legal control and guardianship of minor children; in many States the earnings of the wife are the legal property of the husband, which he not infrequently claims. The laws by which estates are settled when husband or father dies intestate are in many respects harsh, unequal and unjust. While women have been instrumental in securing these changes in laws, they are not yet fully in possession of the franchise. Indeed, many women do not desire it for themselves, but they are anxious to secure it for a whole. Notwithstanding these differences in opinion, thirty-one States and Territories have conferred the right of suffrage in full or in part. In Wyoming, Colorado, Utah and Idaho women vote on all questions as fully as men, and are fully eligible to office. In Kansas they vote at municipal elections. In Iowa taxpayers women vote on questions concerning expenditures of public money. In Illinois women vote for trustees of the State University, and in more than half of the United States they vote on school questions.

ORGANIZATIONS OF WOMEN.

The great progress that women have made in working with each other shows their capacity for the better co-operation. No other tendency has been so marked in the development of the last three decades as has the tendency to combine in groups or clubs or organizations, in order to accomplish the greater good. Within that time over sixty societies of national scope have been founded for women by women. There are local boards of women by the hundred, organized to help the defective, the delinquent and the dependent classes of society. Hardly a city or a village that has not its club of women united for purposes of good. Within the last decade in half a dozen principal cities of the world have been held great gatherings of thousands of women, united for the study of those things that shall benefit humanity.

There is one organization, the National Council of Women, composed of about twenty organizations, having an aggregate membership of 800,000 women. These National Councils, established in eight different countries, have united and formed an International Council. This organization is quite distinct from the great Federation of Clubs, which includes between 1,000 and 1,500 separate organizations, engaged in study of those things that aid in their own development, or in study of countries and conditions remote from themselves. Yet study for their own improvement, and study of remote conditions, have in the last decade rather given place to study of religious and social and industrial problems immediately at hand.

During the last decade more than one half have passed from the student stage to that of practical service in the improvement of the social conditions of the communities in which they are established. For illustration, let me call attention to an article in *The Forum* of 1897, in which the work of a woman who has been engaged for the public health alone. This was an untouchable child twenty years ago. About twenty years ago a group of young women formed a Health Protective League. They could have met quietly in pleasant drawing rooms, enjoying fresh air and the fragrance of flowers while they read of the domestic and street conditions of ancient Italy, for example—too far away for any unpleasant impressions. Along the same line came the diet kitchens and the cooking schools for the poor; and much more largely the general recognition of public health movement has been inaugurated by women. If our space would admit, we might here rehearse the many fine and noble deeds of many of many lines of practical, genuine service, wrought by co-operation on the part of the women of the world, which are only too faintly hint of what might be told, must suffice.

Few as the women of progress are, in comparison with what the masses are, yet enough to warrant the belief that the problems of the twentieth century will be solved by them. They are not to be led by the intelligent, united work of men and women together.

MARY LOWE DICKINSON,
Honorary President National Council of Women.

FOR FEMININE READERS

HINTS TO OVERWROUGHT WOMEN WHO ARE RUSHING THROUGH LIFE.

Women Are Successful as Drug Dispensers—Pleasant Pastime of Scrap-Book Making.

The coming woman will be a thing of beauty, a rule and not an exception. A plain woman, whose graceful one will be looked upon with pity, as deformity is now, says a writer in the Philadelphia Inquirer.

Neither drugs nor medicine will bring this about—only plenty of the purest air to be had and exercise to keep blood in circulation. To remain young a woman must keep her joints limber, she must keep up active habits and make the most of nature's gifts by cultivating them with assiduous attention. These are the lessons we are teaching our girls. More than one-half of the best and sturdy figures are due to careless habits. If women really had appreciated the value of breathing exercises flat chests and round backs would become obsolete. If Indian clubs or dumb-bells were a part of the practical furnishing of the feminine bedroom undeveloped arms would not be known. If a proper carriage of the body was universal there would be grace where awkwardness now rules. These are the lessons which women refuse to learn. Correct breathing is the first law of health and comfort, and a positive joy when you get accustomed to it. In cold weather a warm glow can be sent through the whole body by filling the lungs to their capacity with fresh air and holding it as long as you can. Two or three of these deep breaths are all you need to make you forget that the weather is cold. In the warm season this breathing gives such lightness and strength to the body as to make you oblivious of the heat. It is a good plan to take a few of these breaths whenever you go into the air, as they give the lungs vitality and remove whatever impurities you may have been breathing in a close apartment.

When a woman is confined closely to the house these health and beauty exercises can be practiced before an open window. The hands should be raised straight over the head and then dropped naturally to the sides without paying the least attention to the shoulders. They will fall into place without assistance. Then, with closed mouth, a long, deep breath should be taken in, held for five seconds, and then exhaled. This not only strengthens the lungs, but increases the measurement of the chest, and is the surest means of keeping the ribs and other petty ills of the flesh. A full, round chest and a flat back are the first requisites of a figure, and those who are not born with these advantages can acquire them by reasonable methods must either resort to art or acknowledge their deformity every day of their lives. The birthday of a woman must take a little more care of herself, increase the codding, but develop the chest, and the chest must have an interest of some kind outside of her routine work, but she should not pursue it to the point of exhaustion. Rest, proper food, unlimited bathing and plenty of exercise will give her enough to think about in addition to her regular duties and her diversions, and a few grains of common sense will make her a more useful and more contented woman.

Another beautiful scrapbook, but this would only be possible to a traveler, might be made of unmounted photographs, which would be of course the greatest advantage. Women really try to do too much; they overlook the many things which are best left undone. Men, as a rule, concentrate their energies on a few things, and let the side diversions, while women divide theirs into infinitesimal parts. That is one cause of their nervousness, and the other is the monotony of their lives. They have a number of unnecessary duties which keep women in a perpetual fret state. You have heard the nervous woman say, "I am rushing through the world to find a cause for that strictly feminine complaint, nerves. In health the nerves are the only cry out when the body or brain is overtaxed. We rush to work to places of usefulness. We put up with the most of our one thought, apparently, a desire to pass somebody. I realize the difficulty of changing one's habits. Women, especially, are averse to trying experiments, even though they often feel that they would like to live differently. So they make modifying, less sweetening, because they lack the moral courage to change. It is almost useless to talk to people who never take holidays. They get very little out of life. They grow old before their time because they take no pains to keep young. Youth is coy and has to be wooed persistently and patiently, and the woman who has no time to spend in coaxing. They will not acknowledge the value of five-minute naps because they are too busy. They do not know how cat naps brace up the system and relax the nerves. So they are weary of course, and weary of themselves as the veriest household drudge, but to whom good looks are paramount. They have a nervous system, and a few grains of common sense will make them a more useful and more contented woman. They have a number of unnecessary duties which keep women in a perpetual fret state. 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